

Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5720

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14922

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, FR, EG

REF: CAIRO 10380

1. WE HAVE NOTHING MORE ON BREZHNEV'S "ILLNESS" THAN WHAT IS AVAILABLE FROM THE PRESS AND WHAT IS BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS BY BREZHNEV HIMSELF AND OTHER SOVIET SOURCES. BREZHNEV CALLED FRENCH JOURNALISTS IN MORNING OF OCTOBER 17 TO TELL THEM HE HAD A SLIGHT CHILL, WHICH HE HAD CAUGHT "MAYBE FROM A WINDOW" MORNING OF GISCARD'S ARRIVAL OCTOBER 15 AND HAD GOTTEN WORSE SECOND DAY, WHENCE REARRANGEMENT OF SCHEDULE SENDING GISCARD TO BORODINO OCTOBER 15 INSTEAD OF OCTOBER 18 AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED AND FILLING BORODINO SLOT WITH POLITICAL TALKS PLANNED FOR OCTOBER 16. PRAVDA SOURCE TOLD AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT OCTOBER 16 P.M., AS WESTERN PRESS UPROAR ON BREZHNEV' HEALTH MOUNTED, THAT BREZHNEV WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH NOSE AND THROAT ("A TICKLE") AND WISHED TO SAVE ENERGY.

2. NONE OF THIS IS IMPLAUSIBLE, BUT IN OUR VIEW NONE OF IT CONSTITUTES SUFFICIENT REASON FOR THE SOVIETS TO BRAVE WESTERN SPECULATION ABOUT BREZHNEV'S HEALTH AND TIFF WITH FRENCH WHICH WAS INEVITABLE ONCE SCHEDULE WAS CHANGED, UNLESS IT CAME ON TOP OF SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES. FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICER WHO HAD TWO CLOSEUP VIEWS OF BREZHNEV OCTOBER 15 SAID HE LOOKED FINE.

STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

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